



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CONTACT:** Meghan Wedd McGuire  
(804) 786-9048

**DEADLINE EXTENDED TO AUGUST 15 FOR DMHMRSAS NAME CHANGE FEEDBACK**

**Richmond, VA** – Given the great public interest in potential new names for the department, the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) has extended the submission deadline until August 15, 2008 to ensure stakeholders have the opportunity to register their feedback.

With near-unanimous support in both the House and Senate, the 2008 General Assembly passed a bill requiring the replacement of the term “mental retardation” with “intellectual disabilities” throughout the Code of Virginia. A reenactment clause in the bill required the 2009 Assembly to pass the bill again before becoming law on July 1, 2009, affecting DMHMRSAS and other agencies.

Because DMHMRSAS will be changing its name with the passage of this bill, now is an appropriate time to modernize the entire 20-year-old name. In recent years, many states have updated their names to ensure they in no way promote stigma or reinforce negative stereotypes.

Four carefully-worded options were offered for public input. The language in each option meets three goals: shortening the current name and acronym, using positive terms related to the department’s services, and using language more reflective of the department’s mission, values and programs. Also, the public was encouraged to submit comments or alternative suggestions to the four choices. The options include:

- Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services (DBDS)
- Department of Behavioral Health and Supportive Services (DBHSS)
- Department of Behavioral and Supportive Services (DBSS)
- Department of Supportive and Recovery Services (DSRS)

Many of the over 1,250 responses include alternative suggestions to the four choices. The final decision for any change in a state department’s name lies with the Governor and the General Assembly.

The public may submit its feedback via the DMHMRSAS Web site at [www.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov](http://www.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov).

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*Virginia’s public mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services system is comprised of 16 state facilities and 40 community services boards (CSBs) that serve children and adults who have or who are at risk of mental illness, serious emotional disturbance, mental retardation, or substance use disorders.*